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DEPT FOR AF/W, IO/EDA (CATHLEEN CAROTHERS), USAID/GH (DALE GIBB AND JAMILA SQUIRES)

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SUBJECT: SIERRA LEONE: VIEWS ON UNICEF COUNTRY PROGRAM DOCUMENTS

REF: SECSTATE 64154

¶1. In response to reftel, post generally agrees with the UNICEF draft country program document for Sierra Leone. Post has a positive working relationship with UNICEF. Post recommends UNICEF include additional information on the Trafficking in Persons Project within its Sierra Leone Child Protection Program. We encourage UNICEF to highlight how it has utilized funding from the U.S. Department of State Global Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Fund to assist the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs to formulate a one-year (2007) plan of action on trafficking in persons and has increased collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on trafficking issues.

¶2. As part of the Sierra Leone TIP program, UNICEF is providing assistance to the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) to: 1) strengthen capacity through policy and legislative reforms and training of personnel, especially in the Criminal Justice System; 2) establish an effective and coordinated mechanism to respond to issues of Trafficking in Persons, including prevention and rapid response; 3) promote family practices and community responses which better protect persons, especially children from being trafficked; and 4) create a greater awareness among policy makers, community leaders, civil society, parents and communities on the dangers of trafficking in persons.

¶3. We encourage UNICEF to include in the draft country program document its plans and timelines to accelerate TIP activities in late 2007. Those activities include: 1) formulate a three-year (2008-2010) action plan for combating trafficking in persons in Sierra Leone by September 30; 2) train GoSL and NGO personnel on a standardized approach for trafficking prevention, monitoring and protection of victims, especially in areas bordering neighboring countries in partnership with relevant GoSL bodies and other implementing partners by June 30; 3) train GoSL Officials (Police, Judiciary, and Immigration Officers) on the identification and prosecution of TIP alleged offenders in partnership with relevant GoSL bodies and other implementing partners by June 30; 4) sensitize community leaders from the districts falling on border areas with neighboring countries on trafficking in persons, the 2005 Anti-Trafficking Act and the referral mechanisms in partnership with relevant GoSL bodies and other implementing partners by mid summer; and 5) provide assistance to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and the Sierra Leone Police to establish information systems on human trafficking.

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